Buddhist Ethics
The Practice of Compassion
The Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is Duhkha (Universal Suffering)

“...the truth of duhkha, found in every aspect of conditioned existence; birth, death, grief, lamentation, pain, distress and despair; conjunction with the hated, separation from the dear; and not getting what one wants.” (Robinson & Johnson, The Buddhist Religion, 4th ed.)
The Four Noble Truths:

2 The cause of duhkha is trishna/tanha (Thirst or desire)

“I am the architect of my own suffering”
The Four Noble Truths:

3. To eliminate *Duhkha* one must eliminate *Tanha*

“On the arising of the ego, so arises suffering; on the cessation of the ego, so ceases suffering.”
The Four Noble Truths:

4. The way to eliminate tanha is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path (The Middle Way)

- Right Understanding
- Right Resolve
- Right Speech
- Right Behavior
- Right Livelihood
- Right Effort
- Right Mindfulness
- Right Concentration
“The Blessed One began by condemning each of two extremes, saying sensual indulgence is low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, and useless, whereas self-torture is painful as well as ignoble and useless. The Tathagata, by avoiding these extremes, had discovered the Middle Way the produces vision and knowledge and leads to peace, higher knowledge, Awakening, and nirvana.” (The First Sermon S.LVI.11)
The Razor’s Edge

Fair goes the dancing when 
the sitar's tuned;
Tune us the sitar neither low 
nor high,
The string o'erstretched 
breaks, and the music 
flies;
The string o'erslack is 
dumb, and music dies.

(Sir Edwin Arnold's, “Light of Asia”)
Nirvana/Nibhana

- Literally to “blow out” or to “extinguish” the ego
- Sometimes referred to as “the state of no wind”
- Occurs with a fundamental and profound recognition of the illusion of separateness
- One relinquishes the idea of an enduring, unchanging, identifiable self
Anatman (Anatta)

- Rejects the idea of Atman (the Hindu name for “soul”)
- Maintains that we are only an ever-changing, impermanent course of processes called “dharmas”
  - Namas Dharmas – mental processes
  - Rupas Dharmas – bodily processes
- Implies that selfishness is based on ignorance of one’s true being
Interdependent Arising

_Paticca Samuppada_ – dependent origination

=> all beings depend on all beings

=> all actions are felt by all beings

=> moral responsibility is not measured individually but collectively
The Bodhisattva

One who has achieved awakening or has made great progress in Mahayana Buddhism

Characterized by the “The Six Perfections”

1. Dana-paramita (other-directed)
2. Shila-paramita (correct moral discipline)
3. Kshanti-paramita (patience & tolerance)
4. Virga-paramita (determination & perseverance)
5. Dhyana-paramita (skill in meditation)
6. Prajna-paramita (wisdom - one who sees the world as it is)
The Four Immeasurables: Brahma Viharas

“May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes,
May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes,
May all sentient beings never be separated from bliss without suffering,
May all sentient beings be in equanimity, free of bias, attachment and anger.”
Karuna: Compassion

“Compassion and love are not mere luxuries. As the source both of inner and external peace, they are fundamental to the continued survival of our species.”

His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama
Sangha: A community of practice

Plum Village –

founded by

Vietnamese monk Thích Nhất Hạnh, and his colleague Bhikkhuni Chân Không, in 1982, who invited American veterans of the Vietnam War to come and heal from their experiences.
Other Examples of “Engaged Buddhism”

The Dalai Lama won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1989 and Martin Luther King nominated Thich Nhat Hanh in 1967.

“Mean Street Monks” – working in Stockton, who have turned their monastery into a refuge for neighborhood children.

Amitabha Hospice Service – a New Zealand Buddhist charity providing free home help support and companionship for the terminally ill and their families.
Other Examples of “Engaged Buddhism”

Compassion applies to any sentient being
Other Examples of “Engaged Buddhism

Compassion also applies to the non-sentient environment as a whole.